

Subject: Fwd: Miranda, Please Read My Statement on Homeless Outreach and Share Your Thoughts With Me
From: "Miranda Paster" <miranda.paster@lacity.org>
Date: 9/21/17, 7:50 AM
To: "Jasmine Ramos" <jasmine@fashiondistrict.org>
CC: "Andrew Thomas" <Andrew@thewestwoodvillage.com>, "Ellen Endo" <ellenendo@yahoo.com>, "Joanne Kumamoto" <jkumamoto@aol.com>, "Lopez, Estela" <elopez@centralcityeast.org>, "Blair Besten" <blair@historiccove.bid>, "Ellen Riotto" <ellen@southpark.la>

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From: **Councilmember José Huizar - DTLA** <josehuizar@josehuizar.com>
Date: Wed, Sep 20, 2017 at 8:12 PM
Subject: Miranda, Please Read My Statement on Homeless Outreach and Share Your Thoughts With Me
To: Miranda Paster <miranda.paster@lacity.org>



Miranda --

A week ago I joined a new team of outreach workers as they met with and interviewed people experiencing homelessness in downtown Los Angeles. This Downtown Outreach Team is an important step in addressing the crisis of homelessness in DTLA, and, of course, there is much more to do.

While Skid Row is the largest concentration of homelessness in the County, the areas in Downtown outside of Skid Row make up one of our region's key hotspots of homelessness. The most recent Homeless Count found 1,400 people experiencing homelessness in DTLA – not including Skid Row – and 90% of those are without shelter at night.

The new Downtown Outreach Team consists of five members: experts in mental health and substance abuse, a case manager, a medical provider and a peer with lived experience. Operated by the nonprofit The People Concern, this team is one of the first being deployed as part of a larger expansion of outreach throughout the County, made possible through the passage of Measure H and the work of Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas.

This team, and the others that will follow, are based on the success of the C3 program that my office initiated in collaboration with the Supervisor, which provides daily, multi-disciplinary, street-level outreach to those experiencing homelessness in Skid Row. Since January 2016, C3 has assisted more than 1,300 people. In just the first half of this year, C3 has permanently housed 128 people directly from the streets of Skid Row. The C3 program will remain in place, and the Downtown Outreach Team will be focused outside of the Skid Row area, five days a week.

In addition to these proactive outreach teams, I believe we need an immediate response when someone is in the throes of a mental health crisis.

Right now, the police are often the first point of contact for someone in a mental health crisis, and I believe we can do better. So whom do we call when someone is having a mental health crisis in the middle of the street but is not a danger to anyone than perhaps themselves? At the moment, no one.

We need a system by which people can report and refer concerns about individuals experiencing mental health crises and have mental health outreach teams that can answer quickly. The Downtown Outreach Team is an important component of dealing with homelessness on the street, but they aren't and shouldn't be first responders. They're doing sustained daily outreach, working with individuals, building trust, and helping people through the process of moving from homeless encampments into shelters and housing. In addition, we need immediate response teams we can call when someone starts behaving erratically.

The County must commit teams of professional mental health workers, much like the outreach team now being deployed in Downtown, to respond to the growing instances of mental illness on the streets of DTLA. We also need more mental health teams, professionals and facilities, outside of Skid Row and DTLA, across the entire County. People don't experience homelessness only in DTLA, and Skid Row and DTLA can't and shouldn't be the only place to go for mental health and homeless services.

The State sets the rules governing "5150" Involuntary Psychiatric Holds, which are used to assess and stabilize those experiencing a mental health crisis. There simply aren't enough mental health facilities and recovery beds for these individuals. So after a 72-hour hold, the streets are the only refuge for people who need much more

after a 72-hour hold, the streets are the only refuge for people who need much more intensive and consistent care and shelter. We need other long-term options for the County to explore, including Laura's Law and conservatorships.

Ending homelessness isn't simple, and one size definitely does not fit all. I'm grateful for and optimistic about the work of the Downtown Outreach Team. Unfortunately, even as a City Councilmember, often my only resource for addressing a mental health disturbance is LAPD. That's not acceptable. Just as we have done in the past, I'm committed to working with the County, law enforcement, and our partners in the nonprofit sector to do what's necessary to change the broken system of how we address mental illness in DTLA and beyond.

For more information about what's available to help those with mental illness, contact the County's Department of Mental Health at [\(800\) 854-7771](tel:8008547771). As always, if you need assistance with a Downtown area issue, call my Downtown field office at [\(213\) 473-7014](tel:2134737014).

[Have you seen the Downtown Outreach Team in your area? Share your thoughts on how we can help the homeless here.](#)

Councilmember José Huizar - DTLA
<http://www.josehuizar.com/>

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Counting my blessings - Sing and be Happy Today!

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